



Penny Bernard Schaber

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Governor Doyle to Sign Healthcare Legislation

Rep. Bernard Schaber Authored Bill

Madison- Rep. Penny Bernard Schaber (D- Appleton) authored legislation expanding children's access to affordable healthcare coverage. The bill – AB-16 – will require insurance companies to cover hearing aids and cochlear implants for children under 18. Governor Doyle is scheduled to sign the legislation into law tomorrow May 21 at 9:45 am in the Governor's conference room. The bill has been passed by both the Assembly and Senate.

About 200 Wisconsin infants are born with permanent hearing loss every year, which can negatively impact a child's language development and academic achievement. Early intervention in the form of hearing aids and cochlear implants can greatly reduce these problems, but insurance companies in Wisconsin are not currently required to cover these expensive treatments

"Families are paying for health insurance only to find out their insurance doesn't cover hearing impair. These families are taking out loans to pay for healthcare vital to their child's development," said Rep. Bernard Schaber. "Our children and families deserve a choice regarding their child's health."

Special education services for children with hearing loss can range from \$5,000-\$10,000 per year, and hearing aids and cochlear implants can reduce or eliminate entirely the need for such services. In Wisconsin, this translates into a taxpayer savings of \$2 million per year at the local and state level. AB-16 has a further economic impact, in that the unemployment rate after graduation for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals is 76%. Early intervention can help children with hearing loss to gain the skills they need to compete for jobs when they grow up and enter the workforce.

"AB 16 will not only help children succeed in school it will save the taxpayers millions of dollars in educational costs," said Rep. Penny Bernard Schaber.

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